



Peckriding Meadows SSSI © NBP Photographer John Williamson

Working with Wildlife

Upland Hay Meadow Habitat Action Plan

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Plan Lead	Natural England
Latest version	January 2008

Description

This plan is concerned with traditionally managed upland meadows. Such fields are cut for hay in July or August, then grazed in the autumn and again in the spring until the livestock are removed to allow the hay crop to grow. Traditionally they receive light applications of farmyard manure and lime to maintain fertility and a neutral pH. Such fields support a characteristic northern montane meadow community, notable for its diversity, with up to 30 species per square metre and as many as 120 species per field. Typical species include wood cranesbill, lady's mantle, yellow rattle and pignut, while globeflower and melancholy thistle occur more rarely. Of particular importance is a plant community identified in the National Vegetation Classification as MG3, *Anthoxanthum odoratum* - *Geranium sylvaticum* grassland, the distribution of which is restricted to a few valleys in northern England. Upland hay meadows occur on a range of soils including brown earths on level to moderately sloping sites, lying between 200m and 400m above sea level.

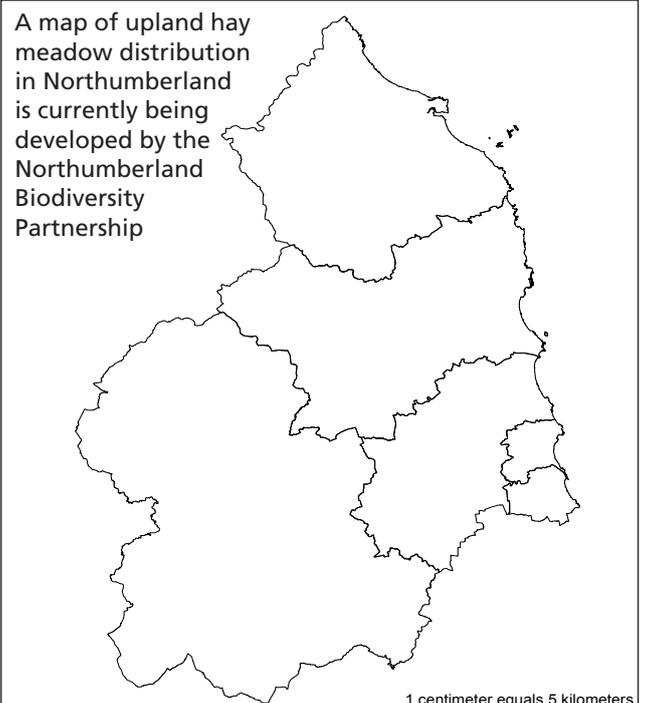
Conservation Status

Habitats Directive, Annex I
 UK Biodiversity Action Plan Habitat
 North East Biodiversity Action Plan Habitat

Current Extent in Northumberland

Until recently the total extent of this habitat in Northumberland has been unknown, but through the current projects 'Hay Time' and 'Seeding Change' a better estimate is being gathered. Of the designated sites 51.3 ha occur in SSSIs and of these 30.2 ha is included in the North Pennine Dales Meadows Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

In the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) it is estimated that there are approximately 15 species rich meadows in the Northumberland part and another 35 that have some interest but might not reach full MG3 status. It is estimated that there are approximately 30 meadows in the Northumberland National Park with some species richness but the number of very good meadows is probably around 10. Therefore an estimate of current extent in Northumberland could be around 100 hectares.



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Current Factors Causing Loss or Decline

- Addition of nitrogen based inorganic fertilisers
- Early cutting before flowers set seed
- Not cutting fields for hay and making silage
- Land abandonment or conversion to pasture
- Long term failure to apply any farm yard manure and lime

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Associated Action Plans

Upland Waders
Black Grouse

Further Information

This upland hay meadow action plan links to the upland hay meadow UK BAP action plan, whose lead partner is Natural England.

North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty 'Hay Time' project

Northumberland National Park Authority 'Seeding Change' project

Targets

Maintain the current extent of good upland hay meadows in Northumberland of approximately 100 hectares (25 sites) by 2010.

Achieve favourable or recovering condition by appropriate management of 110 hectares of upland hay meadows currently in unfavourable condition by 2010

Restore 20 hectares of other grassland sites not necessarily in hay meadow management but of MG3 type in Northumberland by 2015.

Code	Priority Actions	Date
UHM A01	Maintain favourable management and input regimes through the Higher Level Stewardship scheme	ongoing
UHM A02	Establish environmental stewardship agreements for sites which are not top quality to ensure correct management and addition of seed or plants where necessary.	ongoing
UHM A03	Enhance 60 hectares of upland hay meadows in the Northumberland part of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	2009
UHM A04	Enhance 20 meadows (c.50 hectares) of upland hay meadows in the Northumberland National Park	2008
UHM A05	Survey road verges to determine the best remaining fragments	ongoing
UHM A06	Manage species rich verge sites to maintain & improve the species present	ongoing
UHM A07	Identify woodlands and burnsites with meadow fragments	ongoing
UHM A08	Involve communities in projects to restore their local sites	ongoing
UHM A09	Raise awareness about the importance and management of Northumberland's upland hay meadows and their associated species through publicity material, events and training	ongoing
UW A01	Compile a list of the key upland fields that are used as nesting and feeding sites by wading birds	2008